

LIVING IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR IN 2024

The Voice of the Tenant Survey | Wave 4

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Executive Summary

The Voice of the Tenant Survey is a continuous national survey funded by the TDS Charitable Foundation. It looks at people's experience of living in the English private rented sector and is repeated every six months with a unique sample of over 2000 tenants.

WHO LIVES IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR?

- Younger people are more likely to be renters. Nearly half of all tenants are aged 18-34.
- Forty percent of private renters have at least one dependent child at home.
- Tenants of all income levels live in the private rented sector. Nearly a fifth of households have an income of under £20,000 p/a, while 37% of households earn above £40,000 p/a.
- Twenty-two percent of tenants are in receipt of benefits to help pay their rent.
- Three-quarters of tenants are in employment, 7% are retired.
- Nearly one-third (28%) of tenants are living with a long-term physical or mental health condition.
- Nearly three quarters of private renters live in an urban environment (73%), with 8% living in rural areas.
- Most tenants live in houses (48%) and flats (44%), with 8% living in bedsits or a room in a shared house.

AFFORDABILITY

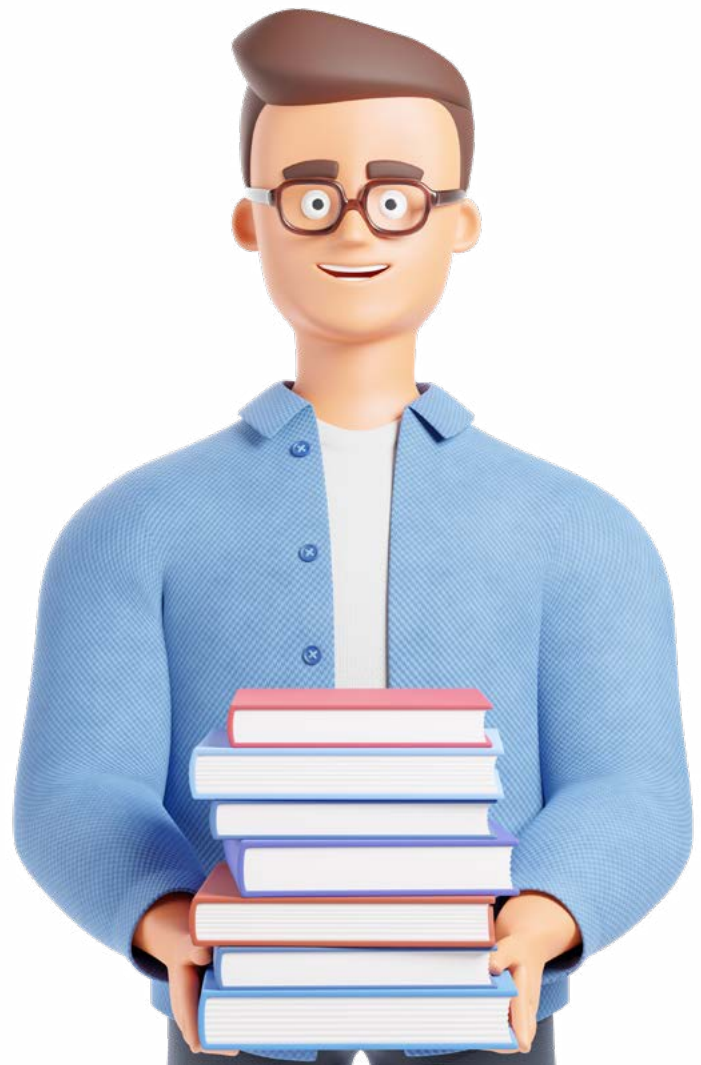
- While the cost of rent increased by 7% between March 2023 and March 2024, this is a considerably smaller increase than previous years.
- In the past 12 months, tenants living in small towns have seen the largest increase in the cost of rent at 11%. The cost of their deposit also increased by 15%.
- Over a third of tenants (35%) said it was difficult or very difficult to afford the rent last month.
- Currently, 14% of all tenants are in rent arrears, down from 16% in March 2023.
- Ninety percent of tenants in rent arrears will take steps to address the situation, and households are increasingly inclined to turn to unofficial sources for help.
- An increasing number of tenants are regularly making cutbacks on household essentials, with 55% making cutbacks, compared to 52% of tenants in March 2023.
- Forty-five percent of tenants are facing difficulties in affording utility bills.
- Whilst 69% of tenants said that eventually they would like to buy their own home, 46% expect to rent for the rest of their lives. Tenants living in small towns and particularly in rural areas are significantly more likely to see themselves as lifelong renters.

SECURITY OF TENURE

- Many tenants have lived in their homes for relatively short periods, with 40% having moved into their property in the last 2 years.
- Some groups of tenants are significantly more likely to have moved within the last 12 months, including students and young people.
- Tenancies are usually ended by tenants due to changing property needs, relationships or other personal circumstances. However, landlord-initiated moves have increased slightly from 17% in September 2023 to 19% in March 2024.
- Tenants are viewing fewer properties compared to last year, but over half of all tenants (51%) said it was difficult to find a suitable rented home.
- Finding an affordable property is the challenge most reported by tenants.
- Paying a deposit, paying rent in advance or securing a UK guarantor is also problematic for many tenants.
- Some tenant groups are more likely to face challenges when searching for properties, such as young people, families with children, minority ethnic groups, and those in cities or large towns.
- Forty percent of all tenants said that they worry they could be asked to leave their homes at any time, whilst only 52% feel secure from eviction.
- Most tenants (73%) enjoy positive relationships with their landlord or letting agent, an increase from March 2023 (69%).
- The longer tenants have lived in a property, the more likely they are to report having a good relationship with their landlord or letting agent.

PROPERTY CONDITIONS

- Most tenants rate the condition of their property as good or acceptable, whilst 13% rate it as poor. Renters living in rural areas are more likely to report living in poor quality housing.
- Tenants who rate the condition of their rented housing as poor are more likely to plan to move in the next 1-3 months.
- Nearly two-thirds of tenants experienced a problem with the quality or condition of their property in the past six months. Leaks/problems with plumbing, difficulties keeping homes warm and serious problems with damp or mould are among the most common problems.
- Energy efficiency remains a key concern for tenants with 47% stating that the energy efficiency of their property could be improved. However, many tenants refrain from actively requesting improvements, mainly due to concerns about potential rent increases.



EXPERIENCES OF DIFFERENT GROUPS

OF TENANTS

- Three percent of tenants live in the cheapest properties, with a rent cost of up to £299 per month. These tenants are more likely to have experienced challenges when searching for a property, and are more likely to be in rent arrears. They are less likely to rate the condition of their property as good.
- Tenants with a long-term physical or mental health condition, or who are not working because of long-term sickness or disability are more likely to face issues related to affordability, insecurity and poor property conditions.
- Forty-one percent of tenants are 'middle earners', with an income of £20,000 to £39,999. They face affordability issues, but have longer tenancies and more satisfaction as tenants.
- Six percent of tenants expressed a desire to move from their current rental property within the next 1-3 months. This group are more likely to be dissatisfied and rate the condition of their rental property as extremely poor. They are also more likely to face affordability challenges.

SOLVING HOUSING ISSUES

- Most housing issues reported by tenants are addressed by landlords and letting agents, either fully or in part.
- When a problem is not addressed, few private renters (20%) escalate their housing complaint to a local authority or redress scheme.
- The main barrier to tenants reporting housing issues and making complaints is fear of retaliation by landlords, in the form of evictions and rent increases. These concerns have grown significantly in importance since March 2023.
- Some tenant groups are less likely to take their housing complaint to the local council or a redress scheme, including women, tenants that are retired, those living in the South of England, and tenants renting more expensive properties.

Introduction

The Voice of the Tenant Survey is a regular national survey that examines people's experiences of living in the private rented sector in England. Focusing on aspects related to affordability, tenure security and property conditions, the survey commenced in 2022 and is conducted every six months with a new sample of tenants. This report outlines the findings from the fourth wave carried out in March 2024, featuring additional questions on how tenants solve housing issues and seek redress.

METHODS

This fourth wave surveyed 2,012 tenants across England who rent from a letting agent or private landlord.

- All respondents were aged 18+ years.
- Fieldwork ran from 18th - 26th March 2024.
- All respondents are unique to this wave and did not participate in either of the previous waves.
- Using data from English Housing Survey 2022/23 and syndicated sources, the final data is representative of private rental households in England in terms of age, gender, region and monthly rental cost brackets.
- The questions from the previous waves were repeated in this survey. Comparisons have been made with both the previous March 2023 and September 2023 surveys.

- Each wave includes a key topical issue; this wave looks at how tenants resolve housing issues.
- When exploring how experiences vary for different groups of tenants, this study reports on statistically significant data. This means we can be reasonably confident that the findings are representative of the wider tenant population in England.
- In this wave the core rental market metrics remained balanced and only showed marginal differences from the previous wave, further indicating that the findings are representative.
- In this report, statistics may not add to 100% due to rounding or non-responses.

THIS REPORT

The report is split into six chapters.

- 1 The first looks at the characteristics and geographical distribution of people renting privately in England.
- 2 The second looks at issues relating to affordability.
- 3 The third looks at security of tenure and accessing private rented housing.
- 4 The fourth addresses housing standards, energy efficiency and requesting repairs.
- 5 The fifth looks at how these experiences vary for different groups of tenants.
- 6 The final section looks at the housing issues tenants experience and how they resolve these.

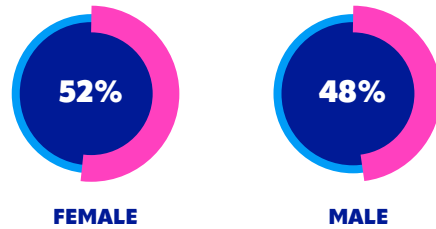
CHAPTER ONE

Who lives in the private rented sector?

SUMMARY

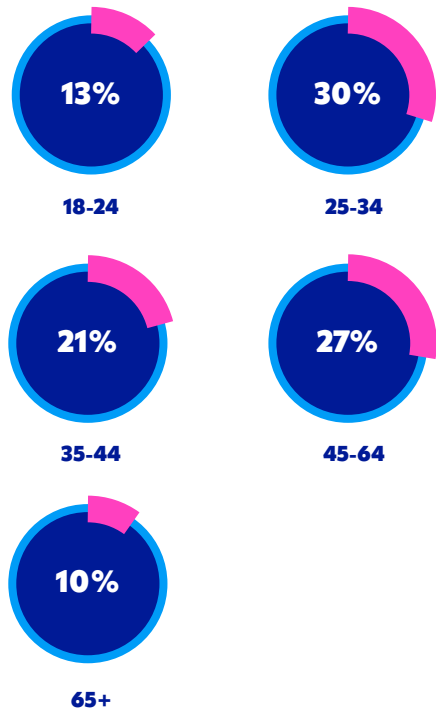
The private rented sector is home to a diverse range of tenants in England. There are private renters from all age groups, incomes levels and ethnicities. Therefore, to understand the experience of living in the private rented sector, it is important to capture this diversity, and explore how experiences differ amongst these various tenant groups.

Gender



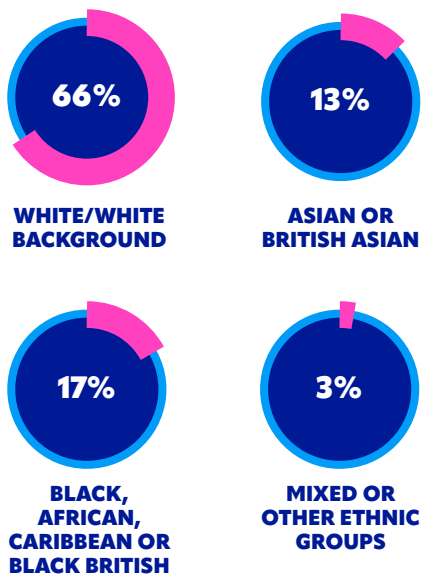
Age

Younger people are more likely to be renters, with nearly half of tenants aged 18-34. However, with the decline in the homeownership rate, the number of older renters continues to grow.¹



Ethnicity

The private rented sector is home to a higher proportion of ethnic minority households than other housing tenures.²

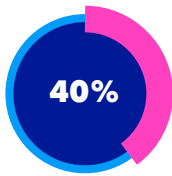


[1] Hamptons, 'An Upsurge in Older Renters', July 2023

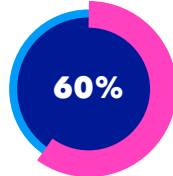
[2] English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023, 'Profile of Households and Dwellings'

Children

A significant proportion of private renters have at least one dependent child at home. The Renters (Reform) Bill, which was making its way through parliament when this data was collected in March 2024, sought to outlaw blanket bans on renting to families with children.



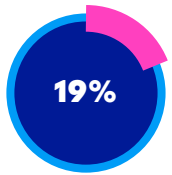
CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD



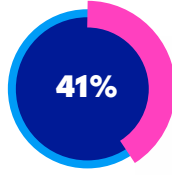
NO CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD

Income

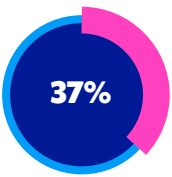
Tenants of all income levels live in the private rented sector. Due to a shortage of social housing in England, the number of private renters on a low income is increasing, according to other reports.³



**LOW INCOME:
UP TO £19,999**



**MEDIUM INCOME:
£20,000 - £39,999**



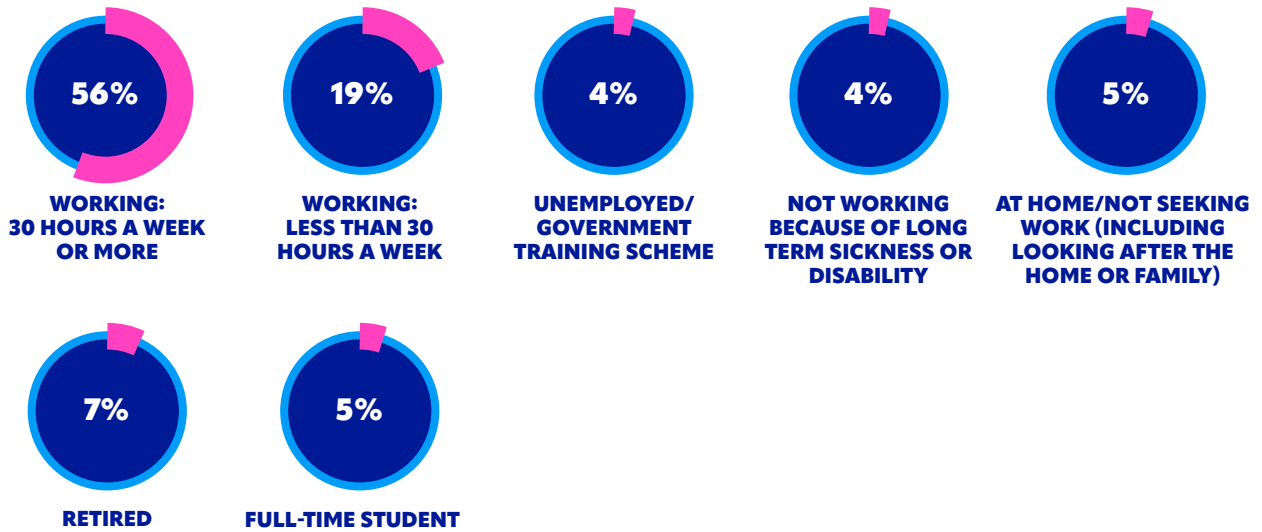
**HIGH INCOME:
£40,000+**



[3] Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, 'Reforming the Private Rented Sector', 9 February 2023

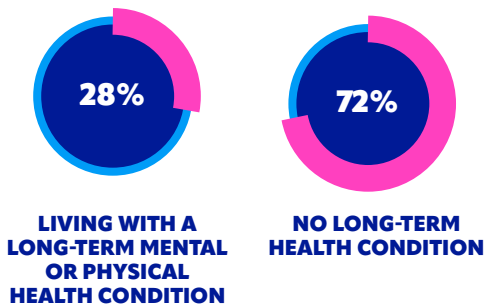
Employment status

When compared with other housing tenures, the private rented sector has the highest proportion of households in work. However, there has been an increase in the number of households in full time education in the private rented sector in the last 3 years.⁴



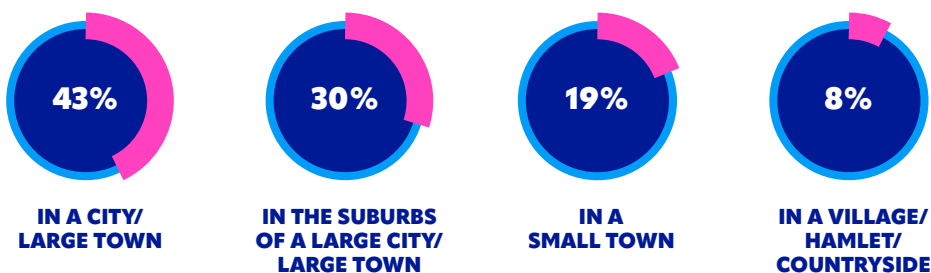
Health Status

Almost one-third of tenants are living with a long-term mental or physical health condition. Poor property conditions are likely to impact more heavily on people who suffer from ill-health.



Location

Nearly three quarters of private renters live in an urban environment. However, research has shown that the number of renters in rural areas has increased significantly over the last decade.⁵

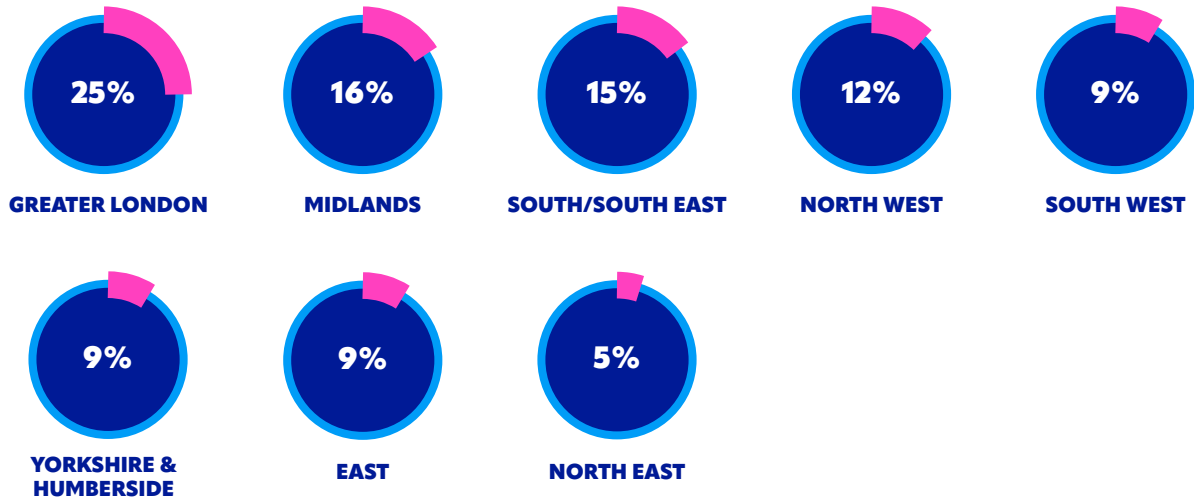


[4] English Housing Survey 2022 to 2023, 'Profile of Households and Dwellings'.

[5] CCN: County Councils Network (2023), 'Housing in Counties'.

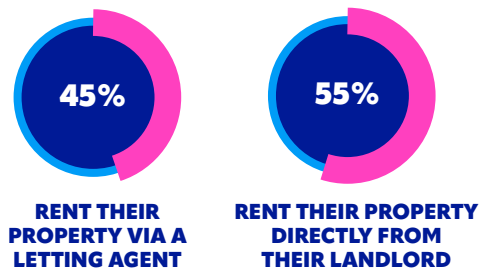
Geography

There are geographical variations in the size and nature of the private rented sector across England. One-quarter of all private rented properties are in London.



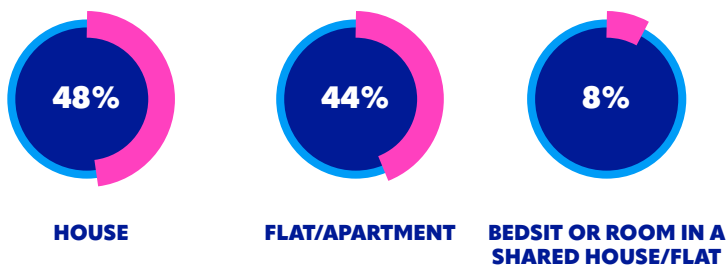
Renting via a landlord

Over half of all tenants rent their property directly from a landlord.



Type of property

Most tenants live in houses or flats.



CHAPTER TWO

Affordability

SUMMARY

While rental price inflation has slowed, many tenants are still struggling with the high cost of rent; thirty-five percent found it difficult or very difficult to afford the rent last month. An increasing proportion of tenants are cutting on household essentials in order to pay rent, with 72% of single parents now finding it hard to meet other essential expenses.

RENTAL COSTS

Tenants were asked for their total monthly rent (excluding bills). While rents rose by 7% between March 2023 and March 2024, this is considerably less than previous years. The survey confirms reports from March 2024 that rental price inflation has slowed in the UK, experiencing the lowest rate of growth for two years.⁶ Notably, it shows that rent prices in suburbs have even dropped by 0.3%.

	MARCH 2023	MARCH 2024	% YR-ON-YR CHANGE
All tenants	£943	£1,007	+7%
Live in a city/large city	£1032	£1,123	+9%
Live in suburbs	£967	£964	-0.3%
Live in a small town	£779	£905	+11%
Live in countryside/rural	£855	£862	+0.8%

COST OF DEPOSIT

The cost of a rental deposit has increased slightly for most tenants in the last year. For private renters in small towns, however, the cost of a deposit has risen by 15%. This group has also experienced largest increase in rent, shown above.

	MARCH 2023	% YR-ON-YR CHANGE
All tenants	£936	4%
In a city/large town	£996	4%
In the suburbs	£964	0.3%
In a small town	£776	15 %
In countryside/rural	£958	-11%

[6] Zoopla, 'Rental Market Report: March 2024'

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

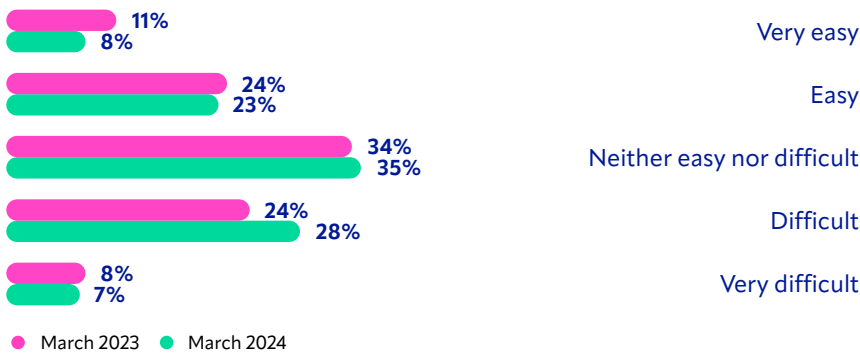
There are regional differences in the cost of rent and deposits. Outside of London, tenants living South/ South East pay on average, over £1,000 p/m in rent.

	COST OF RENT £P/M MARCH 2024	COST OF DEPOSIT MARCH 2024
Greater London	£1,467	£1,396
Midlands	£773	£763
North East	£553	£566
East	£969	£975
North West	£779	£713
South West	£903	£862
Yorkshire & Humberside	£709	£637
South/South East	£1,087	£1,106

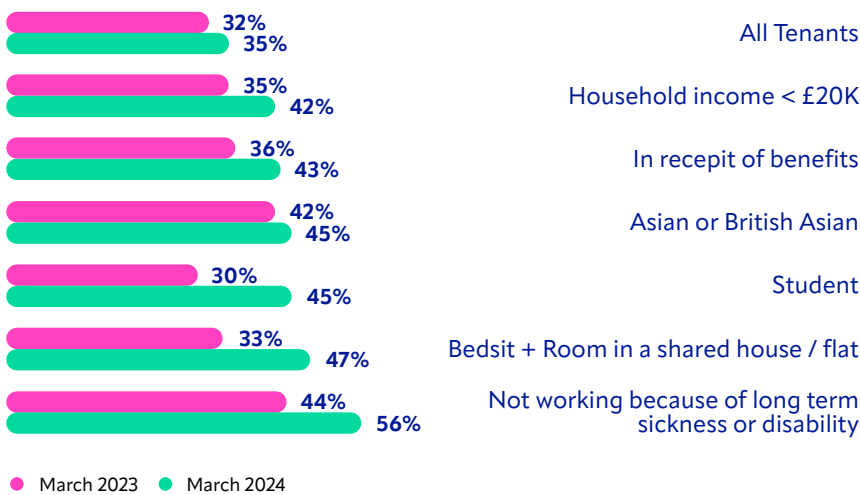
MEETING MONTHLY RENTAL COSTS

The survey shows that the high cost of rent is having a significant, and increasing, impact on tenants. Overall, 35% said it was difficult or very difficult to afford the rent last month, compared to 32% in March 2023. Some tenant groups are particularly struggling to afford their rent, and these challenges have worsened over the last year. Over half (56%) of private renters who are not working because of long term sickness or disability found it difficult or very difficult to pay their rent last month, up from 44% in March 2023.

How easy was it for you to afford the rent last month



% who found it difficult to pay monthly rent last month



ARREARS

Currently 14% of all tenants are in rent arrears, down from 16% in March 2023. However, the survey shows that nearly half (49%) of all tenants who find it difficult or very difficult to afford the rent are currently in arrears, showing the impact of high rental prices. The duration of rent arrears remains relatively short, with most tenants who are in arrears being one month behind.

The findings suggest that 90% of tenants in rent arrears will take steps to address the situation. One in two tenants now turn to family and friends for advice and information or financial support to deal with rent arrears. This is an increase of 18% since September

How far behind in rent are you?



2024. There has also been a 4% rise in the numbers searching for online information. This suggests that private renters are increasingly turning to unofficial sources for help and will try to solve the problem without expert advice or support.

Steps taken to address rent arrears, March 2024

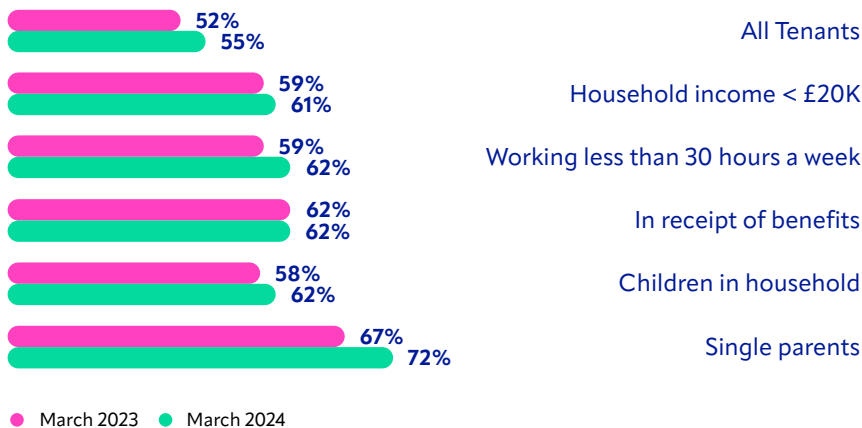


CUTTING ON HOUSEHOLD ESSENTIALS

Higher rent means that tenants must allocate a larger proportion of their income towards housing costs, which can make it difficult to meet other essential expenses, such as food, heating, and clothing. When compared with March 2023, the findings show that an increasing proportion of tenants are cutting on household essentials in order to pay rent.

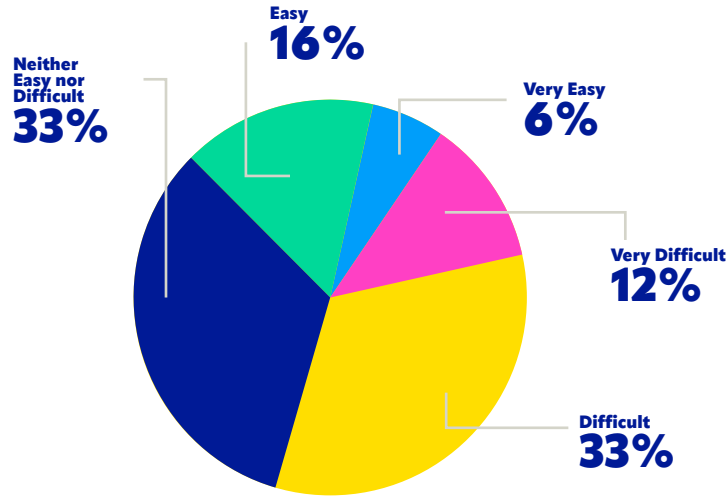
Tenant groups that are most affected are those who are: i) living on low incomes; ii) working less than 30 hours a week; iii) in receipt of benefits; and, iv) have children living at home. Notably, nearly three quarters of single parents are now making trade-offs between rent and other essential expenses.

CUTTING ON HOUSEHOLD ESSENTIALS



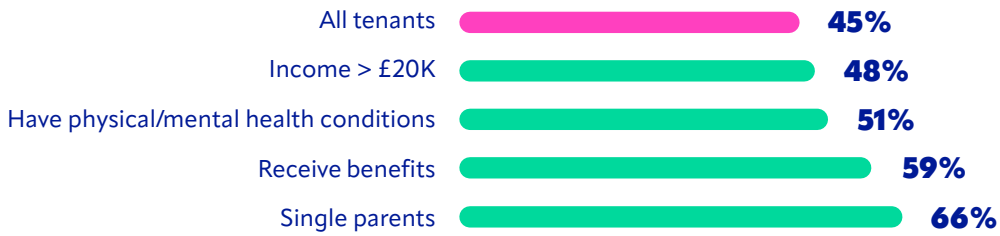
UTILITY BILLS

With a significant proportion of tenants' income going towards rent, many (45%) are finding it difficult to afford utility bills. For tenants on a low income, those in receipt of benefits, and single parents it is particularly difficult.



How easy or difficult was it to afford the energy bills last month? (March 2024)

% who found it difficult to afford the energy bills



HOUSING ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

High rent costs can hinder tenants' capacity to save for the future and invest in other opportunities, such as a deposit on a mortgage. Most tenants aspire towards homeownership; 69% said that, ultimately, they would like to buy their own home. However, there appears to be a mismatch between housing aspirations and expectations among private renters; 46% of all tenants expect to be life-long renters, whilst only 35% are certain that this won't be the case. These statistics have remained relatively static over the previous waves of the survey.

Ultimately, I would like to buy my own property



Wave 2 | March 2023



Wave 4 | March 2024

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Realistically, I'm likely to rent a property for the rest of my life



Wave 2 | March 2023



Wave 4 | March 2024

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Housing aspirations vary across different tenant groups. Households with children are more likely to aspire to home ownership, perhaps because it is seen to offer more security. In addition, 81% of tenants from ethnic minority backgrounds expressed a desire to own their own home, compared with 63% of those from a white background. Research shows, however, that people from ethnic minority groups are less likely to be homeowners.⁷

Would like to eventually buy their own home



Would like to eventually buy their own home



While 46% of tenants overall believe that they will rent for the rest of their lives, there are variations according to type of home environment. Households living in small towns and particularly in rural areas are significantly more likely to see themselves as lifelong renters, compared with those living in urban environments. This is perhaps due to the fact that housing in the countryside is less affordable relative to local earnings than in larger towns and cities (excluding London).⁸

Realistically I'm likely to rent a property for the rest of my life

	AGREE	DISAGREE
In a city/large town	40%	40%
In the suburbs or a large town/city	45%	35%
In a small town	53%	29%
In a village/hamlet/countryside	67%	22%



[7] Joseph Rowntree Foundation, (2021) 'What's causing structural racism in housing?'

[8] Gallent, N. (2023). "The contribution of affordable housing to quality of life in rural England", in Rural Quality of Life. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press.

CHAPTER THREE

Security of Tenure

SUMMARY

Typically, people move home due to changing needs and preferences. However, over a third of tenants moved in the last year due to disadvantages associated with their rental property. When searching for a new home, tenants are viewing fewer properties than last year. Finding an affordable property is still the challenge most reported by tenants.

A significant number of tenants feel insecure in the private rented sector, and landlord-initiated moves have increased slightly in the past six months. Nevertheless, the majority of tenants enjoy a positive relationship with their landlord.

TENANCY LENGTH

Many tenants have lived in their current accommodation for relatively short periods, with 40% having moved into their home in the past two years. However, longer tenancies are not uncommon, with 60% of tenants having lived in their property for two years or more and nearly one-third for at least five years.

Length of current rental tenure: September 2023



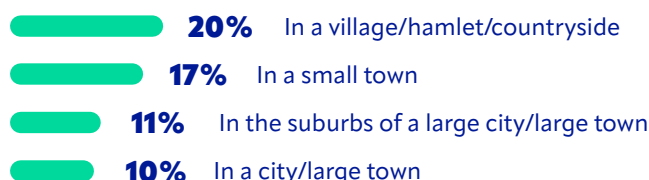
PLANNED RENTAL TENURE

The survey asked tenants how long they planned to stay in their current tenancy. The findings show a wide diversity in preferences.



Tenants living in small towns or rural areas report a higher inclination to want to remain in their property for five years or longer.

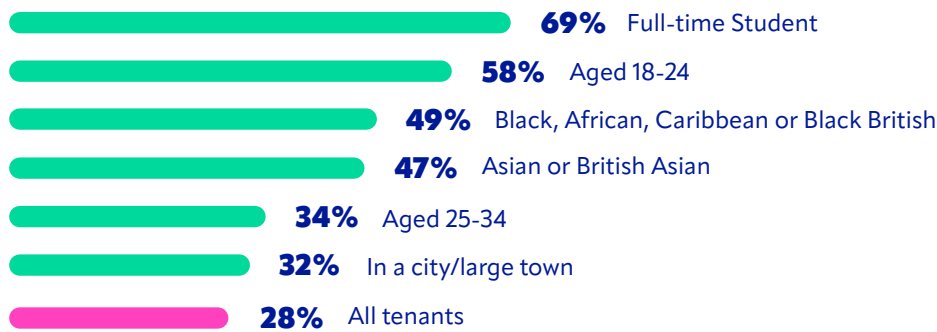
Plan to stay in their property for five years or longer



MOVED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

Some groups of tenants are significantly more likely to have moved within the last 12 months, including students and young people who may be moving for education, job opportunities, or personal reasons. Private renting offers flexibility to adapt to changing circumstance.

Moved in past 12 months: March 2024



REASONS FOR MOVING




The survey inquired about the reasons tenants moved from their last rental property, revealing that tenancies typically end due to changing property needs, relationship changes or other personal circumstances. The most commonly cited reason for moving was relocation, with a key feature of the private rented sector being the flexibility it offers.

Landlord-initiated moves have increased slightly in the past 6 months, with 17% of tenants stating they moved either because the landlord was selling or asked them to leave, up from 15% in September 2023.




Overall, 35% of tenants who moved in the past year did so due to disadvantages associated with their rental property such as poor conditions, unaffordable rent, or eviction. Those more likely to be moving due to disadvantages include tenants aged over 65 years old and people in receipt of benefits (both of whom are more likely to prefer longer tenancies).

Top Reasons for Moving





Changing property needs:

-  **16%** Wanted a larger home
-  **16%** To move to a better neighbourhood/more pleasant area
-  **2%** Wanted a smaller home






Changes in relationships:

-  **9%** Other family/personal reasons
-  **7%** Marriage/began living together
-  **4%** Divorce/Separation

Other personal circumstances :

-  **18%** I relocated
-  **9%** Job related reasons
-  **5%** My budget increased
-  **4%** So my child(ren) could get into a better school

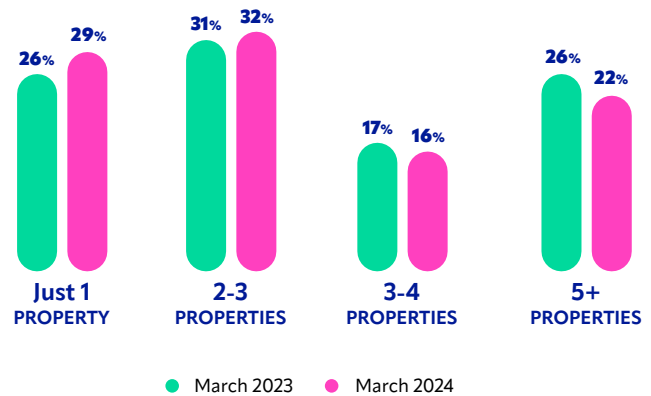
Disadvantages with tenancy:

-  **10%** Previous accommodation was in poor condition
-  **10%** Landlord was selling the property
-  **7%** Landlord asked me to leave
-  **6%** Could not afford rent
-  **2%** Didn't get on with the landlord

NUMBER OF PROPERTIES VIEWED

Tenants who moved in the previous six months viewed fewer properties compared to last year. Recent reports suggest that the gap between the supply and demand of private rented housing is narrowing, with more properties being listed for rent and lower tenant demand, making finding a property easier compared to previous years.⁹

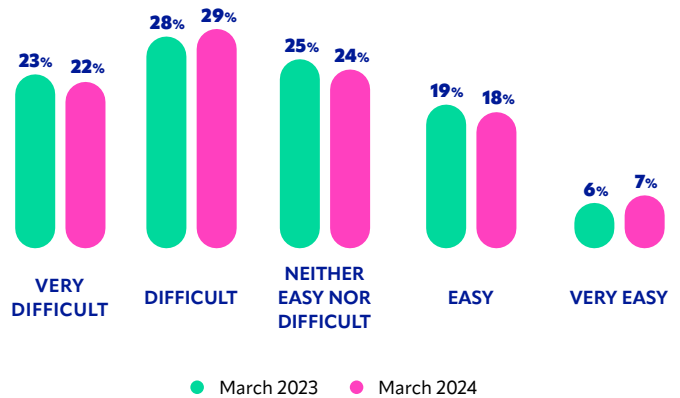
Number of properties viewed by tenants who moved in previous 6 months



EASE OF FINDING A NEW PROPERTY

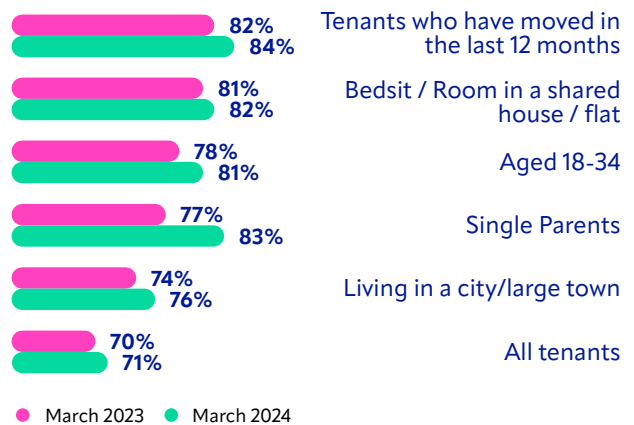
The ease or difficulty of finding a rental property varies depending on several factors, including geographical location and personal preference. Despite reports of pressures easing slightly as discussed above, over half of all tenants said it was difficult to find a suitable property. These figures have remained static over the past year.

When you were looking for your last rental property, how easy or difficult was it to find a suitable property?



Some tenant groups are more likely to face challenges when searching for properties, such as young people, families with children, minority ethnic groups, and those in cities or large towns. Furthermore, a greater proportion of these groups are reporting challenges when compared to last year. While 77% of single parents reported difficulties in searching for a new home in March 2023, for instance, this had risen to 83% by March 2024.

% faced challenges when searching



[9] Zoopla, 'Rental Market Report: March 2024'

SPECIFIC ACCESS BARRIERS

The survey shows that tenants who moved in the last 12 months were more likely to face challenges when searching for properties. There were some exceptions: in the last year tenants were less likely to encounter landlords who refused to let to people in receipt of benefits or with pets. The Renters (Reform) Bill, which was dropped from parliamentary business as a result of the Prime Minister's General Election announcement in May 2024, proposed making blanket bans on letting to tenants with pets or children illegal. This data suggests that the potential changes may already have been impacting on landlord behaviour in March 2024.

Given the high rental costs, it's unsurprising that finding an affordable property is the challenge most commonly reported by tenants. Affording a deposit, paying rent in advance or securing a UK guarantor are also problematic for many tenants.

CHALLENGES DURING LAST PROPERTY SEARCH	ALL TENANTS	TENURE < 12 MONTHS
Finding an affordable property	37%	49%
Affording the deposit	17%	22%
Requested rent in advance	13%	16%
Getting a UK-based guarantor	9%	15%
Landlord/letting agent unwilling to let to me due to my race, gender or other personal characteristics	5%	7%
Had to move to a new area due to a lack of affordable properties	12%	16%
Landlord/letting agent didn't want to let to tenants with children	6%	12%
Having to accept a property that was smaller than I needed or of poor quality, to stay near my children's school or near my work	8%	13%
I had difficulty finding a landlord/letting agent than would allow pets	13%	9%
Landlord/letting agents didn't want to let to tenants on benefits	7%	5%
Universal Credit/Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance would not cover the cost of the property that I wanted	5%	4%
None of the above (I did not face any challenges)	29%	16%

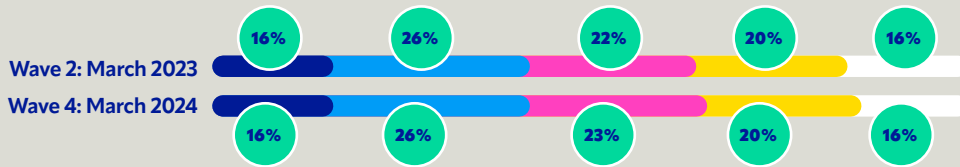


FEELINGS OF SECURITY

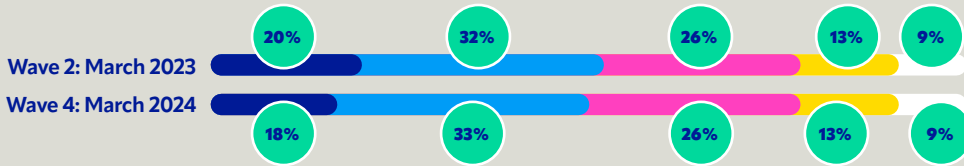
The findings show that a significant number of tenants feel insecure within the private rented sector. Overall, 40% of all tenants said that they worry they could be asked to leave their homes at any time, whilst only 52% feel secure from eviction. It is notable that these statistics have remained stable over the last year despite government data showing that landlord possession actions are increasing in England.¹⁰

Some tenant groups are more likely to worry that they might have to leave their homes, including families with children, people in receipt of benefits, those who are unemployed, and people living with long-term health conditions.

I worry that I could be asked to leave my home at any time



I feel secure from eviction

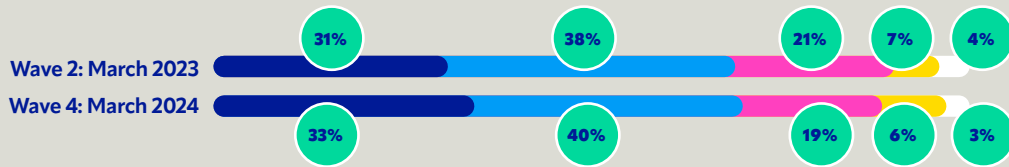


● Strongly Agree ● Somewhat Agree ● Neither Agree nor Disagree ● Somewhat Disagree ● Strongly Disagree

The findings show that most tenants (73%) enjoy positive relationships with their landlord or letting agent, which is an increase from March 2023 (69%).

Some tenant groups are more likely to report a positive relationship with their landlord or letting agent, including tenants from a white background, older renters, those who are retired and single parents. Younger people, aged 18-34 are more likely to report a negative relationship.

I have a good relationship with my landlord/ letting agent

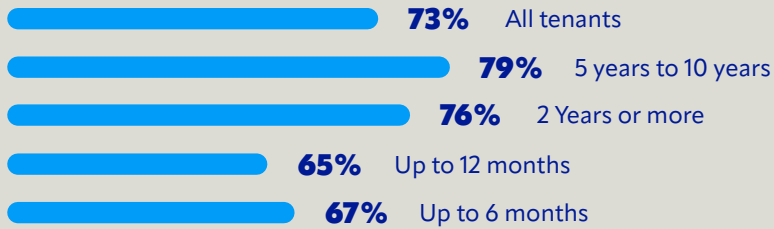


● Strongly Agree ● Somewhat Agree ● Neither Agree nor Disagree ● Somewhat Disagree ● Strongly Disagree

[10] National Statistics: Mortgage and Landlord Possession, October to December 2023.

The findings show that the longer tenants have lived in a property, the more likely they are to report having a good relationship with their landlord or letting agent.

I have a good relationship with my landlord/ letting agent



Agree



CHAPTER FOUR

Property Conditions

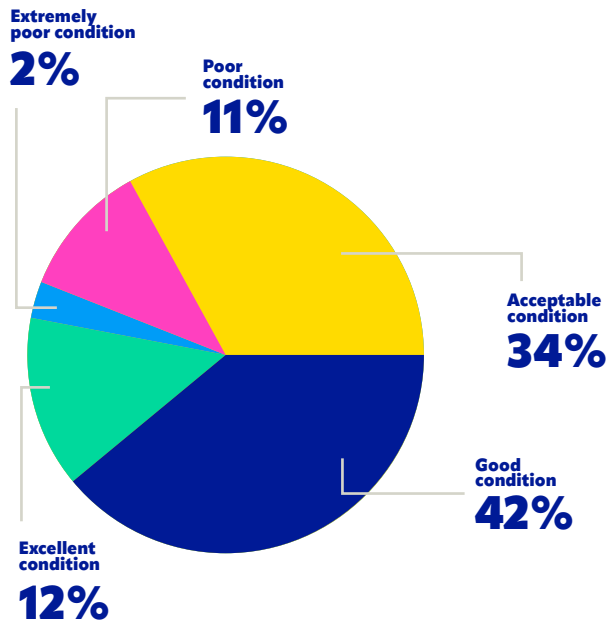
SUMMARY

Most tenants rate the condition of their property as good or acceptable, with 13% describing it as poor. Renters from disadvantaged groups are more likely to live in low quality housing.

Two-thirds of tenants experienced a problem with the condition of their property in the past six months. Despite energy efficiency being a significant concern for tenants, there is also a reluctance among many to request improvement works.

CONDITION OF PROPERTIES

Just over half of tenants rated the condition of their property as good or excellent, whilst approximately one-third deem it to be acceptable.



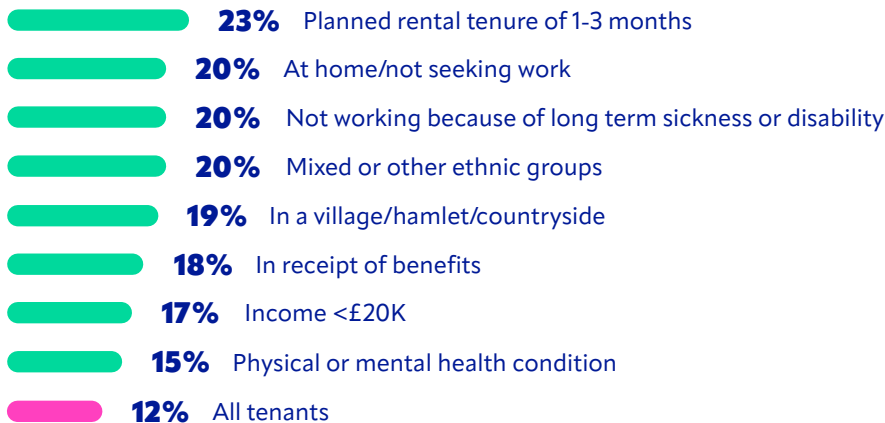
How would you rate the condition of your property?



Some groups are more likely to rate the condition of their property as poor or extremely poor, including those living a low income, tenants not working because of long term sickness or disability or those from an ethnic minority background. Other research has shown that people from disadvantaged groups are more likely to live in poor quality housing.¹¹

The survey shows that, understandably, people who rate the condition of their rented housing as poor are more likely to plan to move in the next 1-3 months. Notably, it also reveals that a larger proportion of renters in rural areas report living in poor quality housing.

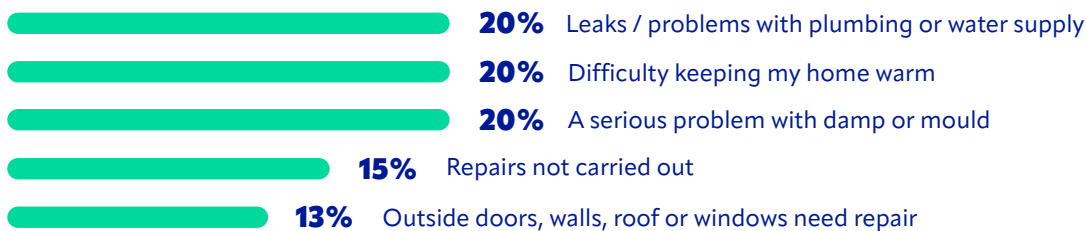
Rated property condition as poor or very poor



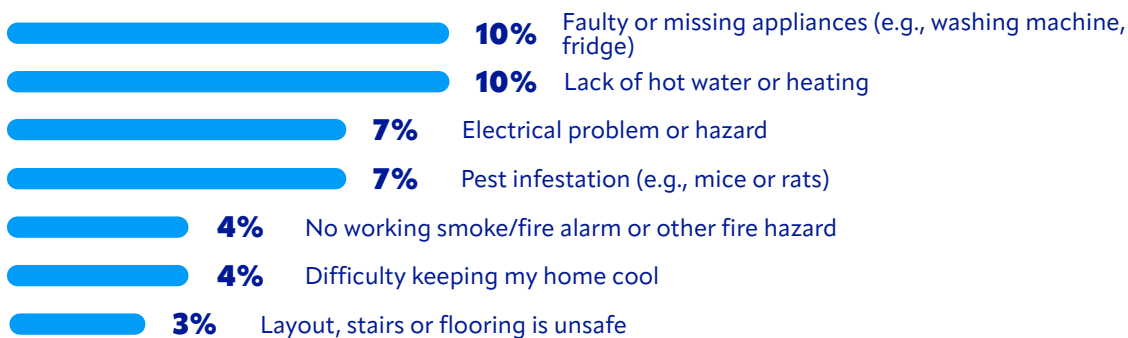
HOUSING MAINTENANCE

The private rented sector is characterised by significant diversity in the condition of the stock and approaches to property management. Whilst 40% of tenants did not have any problem with the quality of their rented home in the past six months, 60% encountered one or more problem. Overall, one fifth of tenants said their property has a serious problem with damp or mould, whilst 15% said repairs were not being carried out.

Top 5 problems in the last 6 months



Other problems reported by tenants



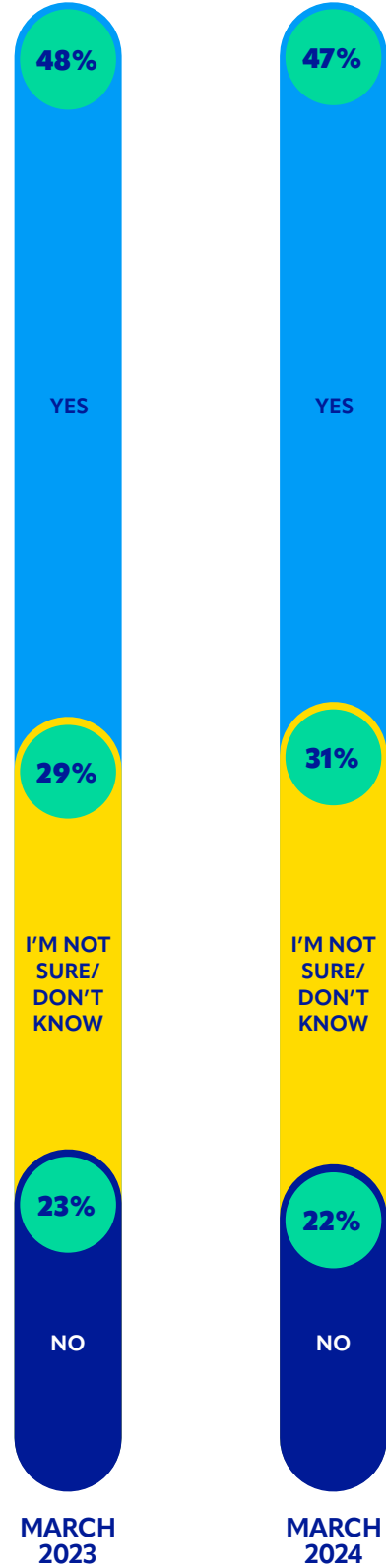
[11] Resolution Foundation, (April 2023) [Trying times: How people living in poor quality housing have fared during the cost of living crisis](#).

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

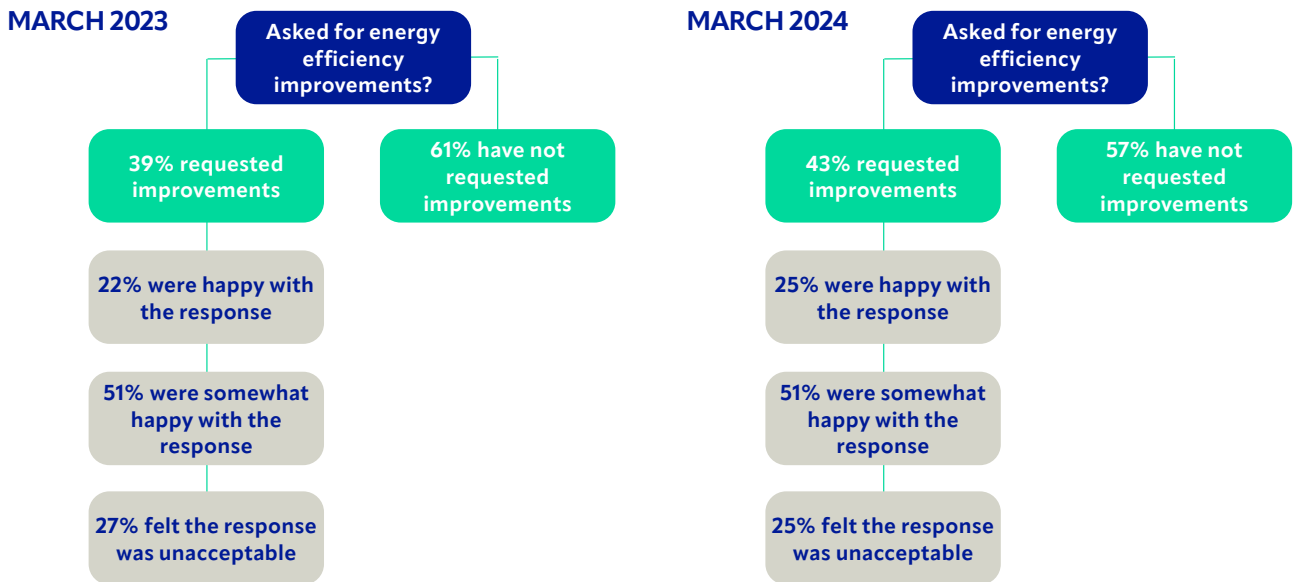
The findings show that energy efficiency continues to be a key concern for tenants, with 47% reporting that the energy efficiency of their property could be improved.



Potential to improve energy efficiency of rental property



A slightly higher number of tenants (43%) had requested energy efficiency improvements compared with March 2023 (39%). However, a majority had still not asked for works to be completed. The fear of rent increases continues to be a primary factor preventing people from making such requests, with 38% citing this concern. Many tenants also think it is not worth asking for improvements, as nothing will be done. However, the survey shows that when renters do make energy efficiency requests, this can prompt landlord action. More than three quarters of respondents said they were happy or somewhat happy with the response from the landlord after requesting improvements.



REASONS FOR NOT REQUESTING ENERGY IMPROVEMENTS	MARCH 2023	MARCH 2024
I am worried the landlord might increase the rent	38%	38%
I did not think anything would be done about it	35%	30%
I want to be seen as a "good tenant"	23%	25%
Too much hassle	25%	24%
I am worried the landlord might ask me to leave	25%	24%
I have a good relationship with my landlord, I don't want to bother them	22%	21%
I'm worried about finding another suitable rental property	19%	12%
I know my landlord doesn't have the money to improve the property	8%	6%
I decided to fix the problem myself	3%	5%
Other	6%	3%

CHAPTER FIVE

Experiences of Different Groups of Tenants

SUMMARY

Understanding the experience and preferences of people in the private rented sector requires consideration of various tenant groups and living arrangements. The survey found experiences vary according to income level and rental cost of property.

This chapter also looks at the experiences of tenants with mental or physical health conditions, and those not able to work because of long-term sickness or disability. Lastly, it considers the experience of tenants who want to move out of their current rental property soon.

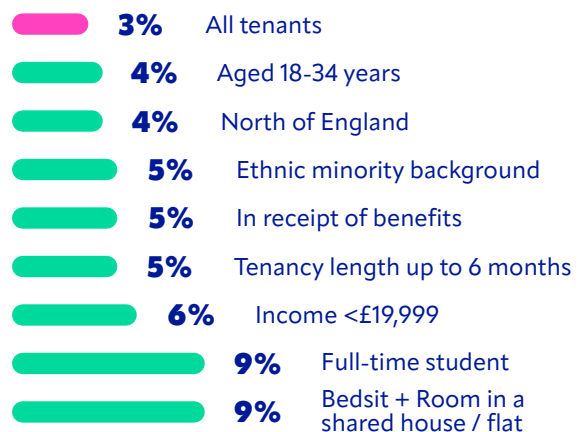
As shown in Wave 3 of the survey, tenants in receipt of benefits, tenants with children, tenants from minority ethnic backgrounds and older renters have a different experience of renting. See our [Wave 3 report](#) for a discussion of (findings which were also reflected in this wave) how their experiences differ. This report explores the experiences of other groups of tenants.

TENANTS LIVING IN THE CHEAPEST PROPERTIES

Overall, 3% of tenants surveyed live in the cheapest properties, with a rent cost of up to £299 per month.

Tenant groups more likely to live in the cheapest properties include younger people aged 18-34, households on a low income, those living in the North of England, and tenants renting bedsits or a room in a shared house.

Rent <£299 per month



1 Property search challenges:

- Tenants living in the cheapest properties are more likely to have experienced challenges when searching for a property, with 79% stating this, compared to 71% of all tenants. For the specific challenges faced, the divergence was greater: a fifth of this group found it difficult to pay rent in advance and 13% struggled to find a property that could be covered by Housing Benefit, compared to 13% and 5% of all tenants respectively. Tenants in the cheapest properties were also twice as likely to experience discrimination or have to accept a less desirable property to stay near work or their children's school.

CHALLENGES FACED DURING LAST PROPERTY SEARCH:	ALL TENANTS	TENANTS IN CHEAPEST PROPERTIES (<£299 PER MONTH)
Any challenge	71%	79%
Landlord/letting agent requested rent in advance	13%	20%
Having to accept a property that was smaller than I needed or of poor quality, to stay near my children's school or near my work	8%	17%
Landlord/letting agent unwilling to let to me due to my race, gender, or other personal characteristics	5%	11%
Universal Credit/Housing Benefit/Local Housing Allowance would not cover the cost of the property I wanted	5%	13%

- However, tenants living in the cheapest rented homes are less likely to have viewed numerous properties. Only 13% looked at more than 5 properties during their search, compared with 26% of all tenants, possibly due to the unavailability of more affordable housing in the private rented sector.

2 Affordability challenges:

- Tenants living in the cheapest properties are more likely to be in rent arrears, at 34%, compared with all tenants at 14%.

3 Housing conditions:

- Households paying up to £299 per month in rent are less likely to rate the condition of their property as 'good': only 31%, compared to 42% among all tenants. Those living in cheaper properties are more likely to describe the condition as acceptable (43%), with 34% of all tenants choosing this rating.

4 Tenancy duration:

- Tenants renting the cheapest properties are more likely to have lived in their home for a shorter period of time; 21% have lived in their property for up to 6 months, compared to 13% of all tenants. This group are also more likely to plan to move within 1-3 months (11% compared to 6% of all tenants)

PEOPLE WITH LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS OR A DISABILITY

Overall, 28% of tenants have a long-term physical or mental health condition or illness, whilst 4% are not working because of long-term sickness or disability.

The findings highlight specific challenges faced by these groups of tenants in the private rented sector, including affordability issues, insecurity and concerns about housing conditions.

1 Tenancy duration:

- Tenants who are not working because of long-term sickness or disability are more likely to have lived in their rented property for a longer period. Of this group, 28% have lived in their home between 5-10 years, and 38% for 10 years or more, compared with 18% and 14% of all tenants respectively.

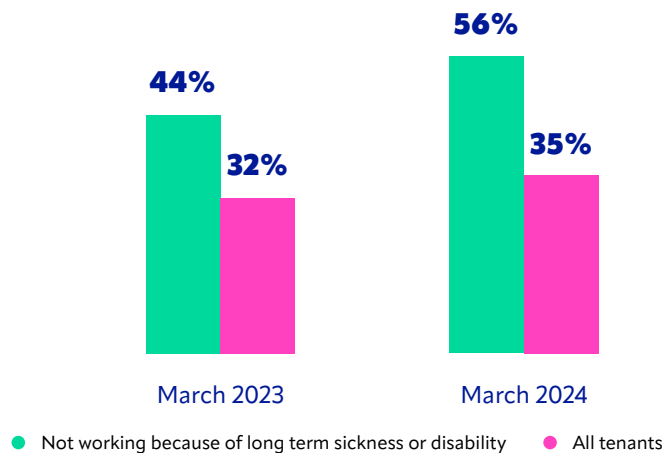
2 Security:

- Half of all tenants with a long-term physical or mental health condition are worried that they could be asked to leave their home at any time, compared to 39% of all tenants.
- Tenants living with long-term health conditions are more likely to fear eviction from their property, with 34% saying they do not feel secure, in comparison to 22% all tenants.

3 Affordability challenges:

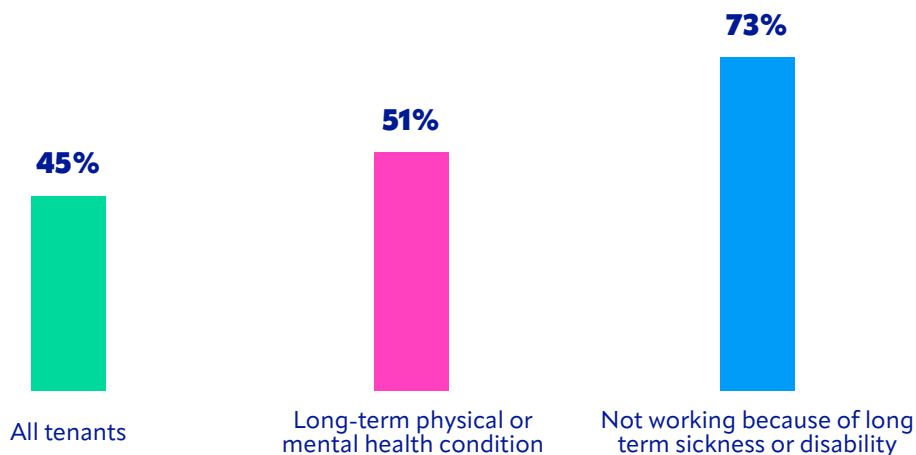
- Over half of private renters who are not working because of long-term sickness or disability found it difficult or very difficult to pay their rent last month, a significant increase from March 2023.

% who found it difficult to afford the rent last month



- Those that are not working because of long term sickness or disability are also more likely to be regularly cutting on household essentials to pay rent; 66% said they did so, compared to 55% of all tenants.
- Finally, over half of tenants with a physical or mental health condition and nearly three-quarters of tenants who are not working due to long-term sickness or disability are finding it difficult to afford utility bills.

% who find it difficult to afford utility bills



4 Property challenges:

- Tenants with a long-term physical or mental health condition and tenants not working due to long-term sickness or disability are more likely to rate the quality of their rented home as 'poor' and are more likely to have experienced a problem with their property in the last 6 months.

CONDITION OF PROPERTIES	ALL TENANTS	LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION	NOT WORKING DUE TO LONG-TERM SICKNESS OR DISABILITY
Property condition rated 'poor'	12%	15%	20%
Any problem with condition of rented home in past 6 months	61%	63%	73%

5 Tenant satisfaction:

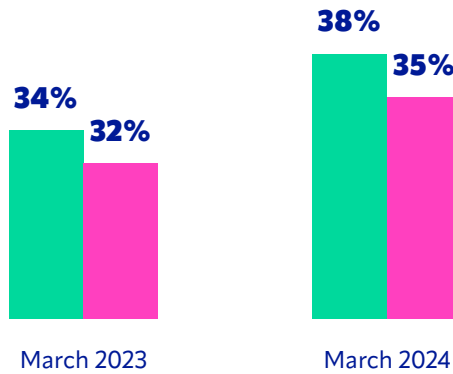
- People with long-term physical or mental health conditions are more likely to describe themselves as dissatisfied as a tenant (15%), compared to all tenants (12%).
- 8% of tenants that are not working due to long-term sickness or disability say they are very dissatisfied as a tenant, in comparison to 4% of all tenants.

MIDDLE EARNERS

The challenges faced by 'middle earners' have become a topic of concern recently.¹² The survey shows that 41% of people living in the private rented sector fall into this category. Middle earners (with an income of £20,000 to £39,999) face affordability issues but have longer tenancies and higher rates of satisfaction.

- Middle earners are increasingly likely to struggle to afford the rent; 38% struggled in March 2024, compared with 35% of all tenants.

% who found it difficult to afford the rent last month



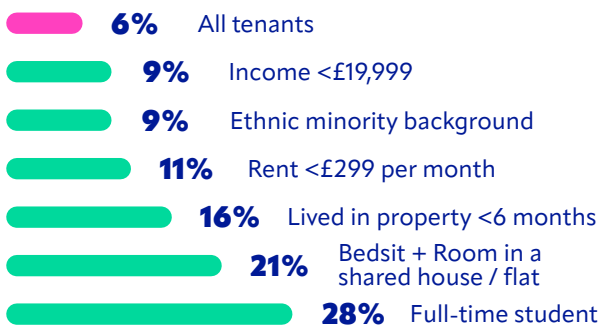
- 59% of middle earners said they regularly make trade-offs between rent and other essential expenses, compared to 55% of all tenants.
- Middle earners are more likely to have long-term tenancies, with 17% having lived in their rented property for 10 years or more, in comparison with 14% of all tenants.
- While 66% of all renters say they are satisfied as a tenant, 69% of middle earners are satisfied.

TENANTS WHO WOULD LIKE TO MOVE SOON

Overall, 6% of tenants expressed a desire to move from their current rental property within the next 1-3 months. The findings highlight the challenges experienced by this cohort of tenants.

Tenants that are more likely to want to move soon include those on a low income, people from an ethnic minority background or those living in a bedsit. Students are also part of this cohort; as their tenancies often align with the academic year, they are more likely to move frequently.

Plan to stay in their property for 1-3 months



[12] abrdn Financial Fairness Trust, (Feb 2024) 'Caught in the Middle'

1 Tenancy satisfaction:

Private renters who want to move soon are more likely to state that they are dissatisfied as a tenant, with 21% expressing dissatisfaction, compared with 12% of all tenants.

2 Housing conditions

- 7% of tenants who expressed a desire to move in the next 1-3 months described the condition of their current rental property as extremely poor, while only 2% of all tenants did so.
- Tenants who want to move soon are more likely to have had a problem with the condition of their rental property in the last 6 months.

Problems with condition faced in last 6 months



3 Affordability challenges

- Tenants who want to move soon are facing affordability issues in the private rented sector, with 64% regularly having to cut their spending on household essentials to pay rent, compared with 55% of all tenants.
- Tenants who would like to move in the next 1-3 months were more likely to experience challenges related to affordability during their last property search.

	ALL TENANTS	TENANTS WHO WANT TO MOVE IN 1-3 MONTHS
Any challenge	71%	83%
I had difficulty in finding an affordable property	37%	46%
Difficulty in affording a deposit	17%	32%
Landlord/letting agent requesting rent in advance	13%	22%

CHAPTER SIX

Solving Housing Issues

SUMMARY

Although most housing issues reported by tenants are addressed by landlords and letting agents, either fully or in part, sometimes further action is needed by tenants when issues remain unaddressed. Very few private renters, however, escalate their housing complaint to a local authority or redress scheme.

The main barrier to tenants reporting housing issues and making complaints is a growing fear of retaliation by landlords, in the form of evictions and rent increases. A lack of understanding and awareness of available redress mechanisms also operates as barriers to resolving housing issues.

AWARENESS OF KEY DOCUMENTATION

While most tenants stated once again that they had received their tenancy agreement, confirmed possession of other key pieces of documentation continues to be low. Only 39% of tenants claimed to have been sent the Government's How to Rent guide, although this is a slight rise from March 2023. The How to Rent guide, which is legally required to be issued to tenants at the beginning of their tenancy, outlines tenants' and landlords' rights and responsibilities and aims to help tenants solve housing problems.

Confirmed possession of official documentation is slightly higher for tenants renting via a letting agent, than for those renting directly from a landlord.

These figures likely reflect tenants' awareness of these documents rather than the frequency with which they are issued.

% CLAIM YES, I HAVE BEEN GIVEN/SENT THIS DOCUMENT

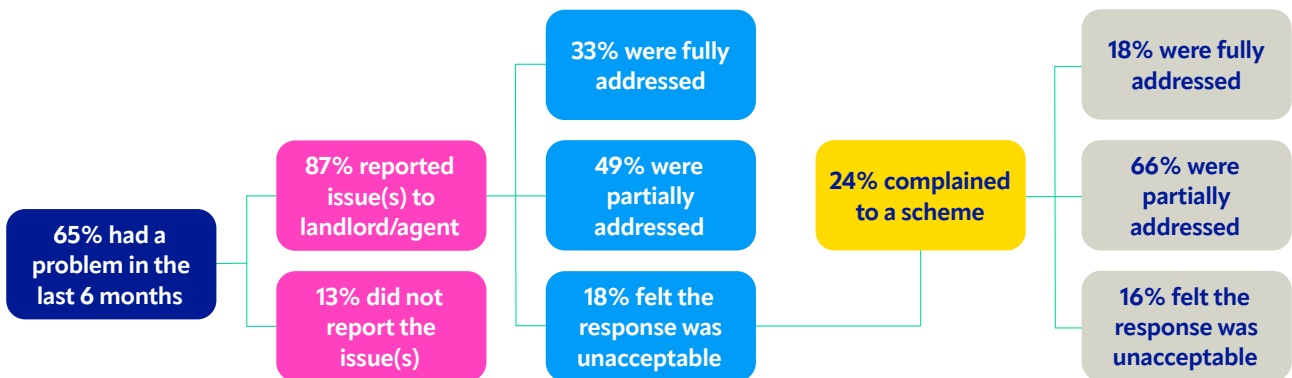
	ALL TENANTS		RENT VIA AGENT		RENT DIRECT FROM LANDLORD	
	March 2023	March 2024	March 2023	March 2024	March 2023	March 2024
Government's How to Rent Guide	36%	39%	42%	47%	32%	33%
Prescribed information about how to reclaim your deposit	47%	49%	51%	55%	44%	45%
Deposit Protection Certificate	57%	57%	63%	66%	52%	50%
Energy Performance Certificate	55%	53%	62%	60%	50%	47%
Gas Safety Certificate	63%	64%	64%	66%	61%	62%
Tenancy Agreement	86%	88%	88%	92%	84%	84%

REPORTING ISSUES

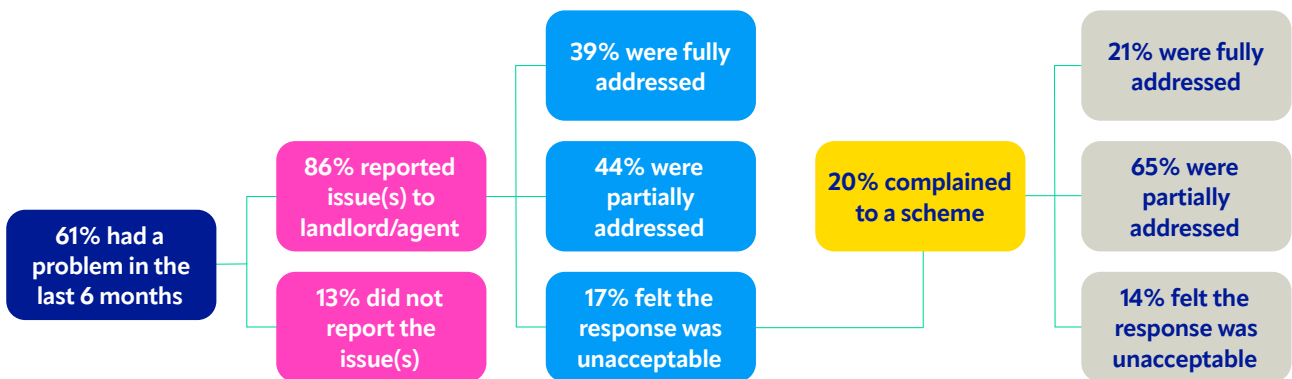
As chapter four showed, two-thirds of tenants experienced a problem with the quality or condition of their property in the last six months. The survey indicates, however, that most tenants (86%) are reporting these repair and maintenance issues to their landlord or letting agent. Of those who reported issues, 39% of tenants said the issue was fully addressed – a increase from March 2023 when the figure was 33% - whilst 44% said it was partially addressed.

When landlords or letting agents fail to address repair issues, the findings show that very few tenants raise a complaint with their local authority or another established redress scheme (i.e., The Property Ombudsman, The Property Redress Scheme or their local council Trading Standards). For those that reported the issue, only 21% stated that their issue was fully addressed.

MARCH 2023



MARCH 2024



In March 2024, the main barriers preventing tenants from reporting issues to their landlord or letting agent are fear of retaliation from the landlord, in the form of eviction or rent increases, and concerns about not being perceived as a “good tenant”. The survey shows that these considerations have grown significantly in importance since March 2023, as have worries about finding another suitable rental property if a complaint is made. This could indicate that the current affordability issues in the private rented sector are forcing some tenants to accept poor property conditions. Other key reasons behind not raising a complaint are that the problem did not appear urgent enough, or that the tenant decided to take matters into their own hands.

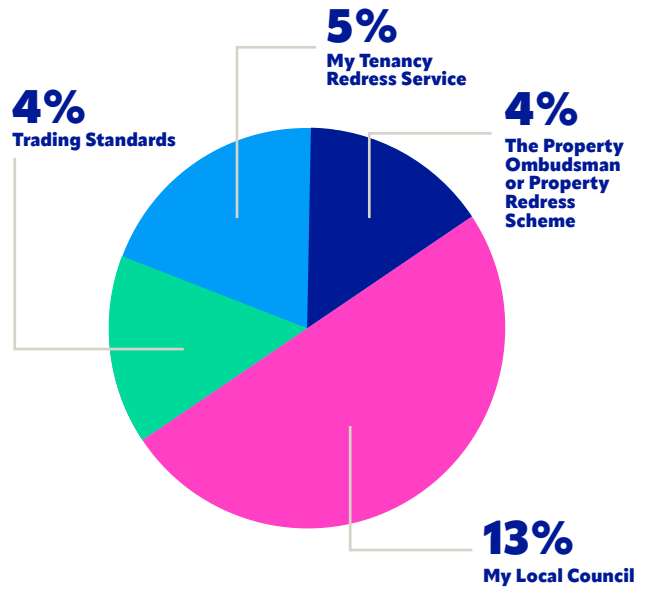
REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING THE ISSUES(S) TO LANDLORD/ LETTING AGENT	MARCH 2023	MARCH 2024
I am worried the landlord might increase the rent	19%	24%
I am worried the landlord might ask me to leave	13%	24%
I want to be seen as a “good tenant”	16%	24%
Problem didn’t seem serious/urgent enough	New option added	24%
I decided to fix the problem myself	23%	23%
I didn’t think anything would be done about it	19%	21%
I’m worried about finding another suitable rental property	14%	21%
I have a good relationship with my landlord, I don’t want to bother them	20%	16%
Too much hassle	23%	15%
I didn’t think it was a problem that can be fixed (e.g. because of age of property)	New option added	14%

SEEKING REDRESS

For the 61% of tenants who felt that their housing issue was not fully addressed by their landlord or letting agent, only 20% took their complaint to their local council and/or a redress scheme. Of these, the local council was the authority most frequently approached.

Again, the main reasons given by tenants for not escalating their housing complaint are related to the fear of retaliation by landlords and the difficulty of finding another rental suitable rental property. Notably, a number of tenants (27%) also stated that they had not taken further action as they were still hoping to resolve the issue with their landlord.

20% of tenants complained to local council/ redress scheme(s)



Reasons for not complaining to local council/redress scheme(s)

FEAR OF THE CONSEQUENCES	
I am worried the landlord might ask me to leave	29%
I am worried the landlord might increase the rent	22%
I'm worried about finding another suitable rental property	21%
I want to be seen as a "good tenant"	19%
I can't afford the rent in another property	17%
Might be expensive/cost too much	8%

KNOWLEDGE OF REDRESS SCHEMES	
I didn't know they existed	18%
Wasn't sure which one to go to	13%
I didn't understand how they could help	13%
It's not clear how to make a complaint	11%

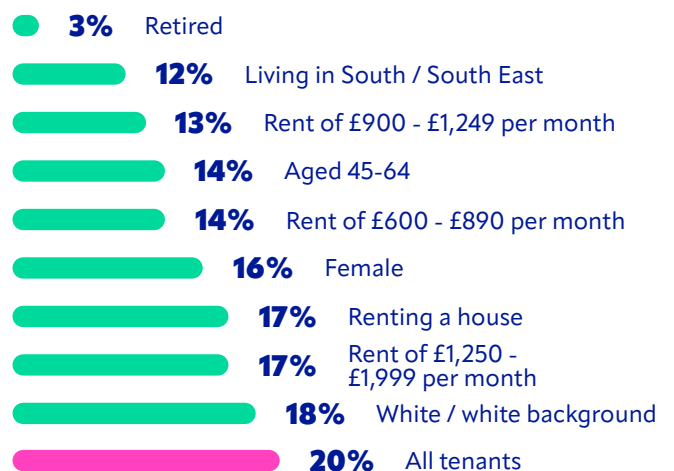
PROBLEM SEVERITY	
I am still hoping to resolve with the landlord	27%
Didn't think anything would be done about it	17%
Problem didn't seem serious/urgent enough	17%
Too much hassle	15%
Works are still being carried out/are planned	10%

Other	2.9%
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Some tenant groups are less likely to take their housing complaint to the local council or a redress scheme. Just 3% of tenants that are retired said they had done so. Women, tenants in the South of England, and tenants renting more expensive properties are also less inclined to escalate their housing complaints.

For more on this topic, see the [TDS Charitable Foundation's 'Resolving Housing Issues' report](#)

Complaints to local council/redress scheme(s)





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